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EXCERPTS FROM CURRENT INTELLIGENCE DIGEST

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LATIN AMERICA

31. Guatemalan Communists attempt to mobilize mass support for government: The Communist-controlled labor and peasant confederations in Guatemala began on 4 June to mobilize their followers for possible armed defense of the Arbenz administration.

Ambassador Peurifoy comments that this move may be designed primarily to demonstrate mass support for the administration, but that another motive may be to provide the government with an excuse for arming civilians.

He notes that the Communist and other pro-Arbenz forces are gaining the initiative in "Guatemala's war of nerves," and that the administration is "demonstrating it has the sinews for defense and intends to use them." (U Guatemala City 903, 5 June 54)

Comment: Communist efforts to create a militant following sufficient to neutralize the army have been noted since last December. As the best-organized progovernment civilian groups, the Communist-led confederations would be the likely beneficiaries of any decision to arm civilians to defend the government in a crisis. President Arbenz has favored such a policy in the past.

The Communists are believed already in possession of some weapons, but not sufficient to provide defense of the administration against an army revolt at this time. Top military leaders are likely to resist providing civilian groups with additional arms which might weaken the army's position. (SECRET)